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STATE AWARDS EMERGENCY GRANT TO ASSIST FARMWORKERS DISPLACED BY FREEZE

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Community Services and Development (CSD) today announced that it has awarded a \$50,000 grant to La Cooperativa Campesina de California, a nonprofit association that represents community-based organizations that provide services for migrant and seasonal farm workers, to provide freeze relief assistance to approximately 200 families in Tulare, Fresno, Kern and Kings counties, which were hit hard by recent sub-freezing temperatures. The Governor has proclaimed emergencies in all four counties.

"The grant will provide supportive services, including emergency food, utilities, transportation, emergency housing and rent to farm workers who are financially dependent upon a healthy citrus crop," said CSD Director Lloyd Throne. "Early estimates are that citrus damage in California may be more than \$1 billion. This estimate does not include the devastating effects on farm workers and their families."

Tulare County alone produces more than half of the state's fresh citrus. Tulare, Fresno, Kern and Kings counties produce millions of dollars in citrus, broccoli, cauliflower, avocados, strawberries and nursery stock and employ hundreds of agricultural workers, most of whom have suffered immediate loss of income. The grant will assist La Cooperativa Campesina de California and its association members in reaching a significant number of freeze victims who would otherwise not be assisted.

"Packinghouses have already begun to cut citrus pickers, sorters and other citrus-related workers throughout the Central Valley," said Raul Meyreles, executive director of La Cooperativa Campesina de California. "We have witnessed the number of people seeking emergency assistance double over the past few days."

Joel Nelsen, who heads the 2,000-member California Citrus Mutual trade organization, estimates that 5,000 citrus pickers and 7,500 packinghouse workers will be affected in the Central Valley.

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La Cooperativa Campesina de California is one of a network of community-based providers and associations with whom CSD contracts to provide direct services to low-income Californians that are funded by federal Community Services Block Grants (CSBG). La Cooperativa Campesina de California serves more than 100,000 clients a year at 85 sites statewide. Other member agencies providing a variety of services for migrant and seasonal farm workers include The Center for Employment Training, California Human Development Corporation, Central Valley Opportunity Center, Employers Training Resource, Proteus and the California Employment Development Department.

The \$50,000 grant is funded by federal CSBG discretionary funds administered by CSD. In 2006, CSD distributed nearly \$56 million in CSBG funds to California providers to fund programs for low-income individuals in local communities.

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